

METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

TRANSPORTATION 2035

GENERAL FOCUS GROUP: PARTICIPANTS RECRUITED FROM RANDOM PHONE POLL

MAY 20, 2008

NAPA COUNTY

Planning for future transportation needs: Similar to the focus groups in other counties, the discussion in Napa County often centered on the importance of public transportation and alternatives to driving. Although the participants emphasized public transportation as a solution to many transportation issues in the Bay area, they also discussed that public transportation may not be as effective in solving the transportation problems of their community. This disconnect between regional and local solutions was unique to Napa County. Even the Sonoma County participants had discussed public transportation, bike lanes, and walking paths as viable solutions for residents' transportation needs. The Napa County participants argued that public transportation should be available for commuters, but many reported that they would continue to rely on driving for their local transportation needs.

Regarding maintenance of current roads, the participants largely agreed that maintenance is needed. Even local roads that were reported to be in good condition were also considered to be too loud for drivers due to surface treatments. When asked about the condition of public transportation in their community, the participants overwhelmingly agreed that there are few alternatives to driving, and, as such, maintenance of public transportation is not the problem. In planning for the future, 8 participants prioritized investments in maintenance of existing systems and services, whereas just 3 participants prioritized investments in building new roads and adding more public transportation services.

Maintain the existing system of roads, and the existing bus, rail and ferry services in the region.	8
Build new roads and add more bus, rail and ferry services in the region.	3

A majority of the Napa County participants prioritized maintenance; however, their allocation of the \$30 billion dollar budget is in line with most of the other focus groups. Overall, 7 out of 11 participants indicated they would spend up to 50 percent of the funds on maintenance projects.

up to 25% (\$7.5 billion dollars)	1
up to 50% (\$15 billion dollars)	7
up to 75% (\$22.5 billion dollars)	3
100% (\$30 billion dollars)	0

With the funds that remain from the \$30 billion dollar budget, the participants reported that they would invest in the following: strategic road expansion projects (5) and improving highway interchanges (2); improving local bus service (3); expanding public transportation in the San

Francisco area, including extending BART and increasing ferry services (1); and creating bike lanes and pedestrian walkways (3).

Congestion relief: Three participants reported that traffic congestion would be better in the future or that there would be no change if funds are only spent to maintain existing systems. However, 8 participants reported that traffic congestion would be either “Somewhat” or “Much worse.”

Much better	1
Somewhat better	1
No change	1
Somewhat worse	2
Much worse	6

In discussing programs that would relieve Bay area traffic congestion, 8 participants prioritized investments in public transit options and 3 participants prioritized investments in highway systems. Since several participants commute to other cities for work, they argued that a combination of these two alternatives should be a priority. Additional public transit options are needed for long-distance travel into San Francisco or Sacramento, but there should be highway system projects to make driving to transit stations easier.

Highway systems to relieve traffic congestion, including ramp metering, high-occupancy toll lanes, etc.	3
Public transit options, including rail and buses to provide alternatives to driving.	8
Walking paths and bicycle lanes to provide alternatives to driving	0

The participants viewed several of the options as possible means of managing truck volumes along freight corridors. In response to this question, participants mentioned multiple plans, so the responses in the below table sum to more than 11.

Keep trucks out of the peak commuter hours	5
Allow smaller trucks to use carpool lanes during congested periods for a fee	0
Encourage more cargo deliveries be made by rail or ferries	6
Build exclusive truck lanes supported by trucking fees	0
Provide more truck parking in commercial business areas	2

Attitudes toward focused growth: Contrary to the focus groups in other counties, a majority of the Napa County participants indicated that transportation funds should be distributed evenly to communities. It is important to note that the participants discussed the advantages of pedestrian

friendly communities and public transportation. In fact, 4 of the participants indicated that it should be a priority to provide more transportation funds to communities that are planning to build more housing along BART and other public transit lines. When the seven participants were asked to explain their responses, they argued that this distribution of funds would put Napa County at a disadvantage since there are so few existing public transportation lines.

Funds to communities that are planning to build more housing along BART and other public transit lines	4
Funds evenly to communities regardless of where they are planning to build homes	7

Providing transit access: Just one participant indicated opposition to discounted transit fares, whereas the other 10 participants were in support of the program. Similar to the other focus groups, the participants argued that public transportation should be a less expensive alternative to driving in order to encourage use. That said, the participants were largely unaware of current fare structures and whether the fares are affordable to the average Bay area resident. The group was largely divided on whether discount programs should be based on household income. Some participants argued that the program would be difficult to administer. A few participants suggested alternative discount programs that would be based on frequency of use.

Emissions reduction: To reduce emissions, 9 of the 11 participants prioritized investments in reducing tailpipe emissions and encouraging alternatives to driving. The participants then discussed the need for fuel-efficient and alternative-fuel cars. Although the subject of alternatives to driving was briefly discussed, this group prioritized reducing tailpipe emissions. At the same time, the participants mentioned that the free market would encourage residents to purchase fuel-efficient and alternative-fuel cars. They argued that the \$30 billion dollar budget is not sufficient to offer incentives for purchase, and that other projects should take priority. In contrast, two participants prioritized reducing traffic congestion and improving traffic flow. To support their responses, these participants argued that local residents will continue to rely on driving and that it will take too long for all of the automobiles to be replaced with more efficient or clean-air alternatives. In keeping with the reliance on driving in their community, the participants' priorities reflect automobile-oriented solutions to air quality problems.

Reducing tailpipe emissions and encouraging alternatives to driving, such as public transit, bicycling, walking, etc.	9
Reducing traffic congestion and improving traffic flow to make it easier to drive around the Bay area	2

Final thoughts on maintenance versus expansion projects: Following the discussion, two participants indicated that they would spend less on maintenance and one participant indicated that he would spend more. It was at this point that the moderator asked the group to further discuss their thoughts on local versus regional priorities. In response, the importance of local maintenance was discussed, as well as strategic road expansion projects.

up to 25% (\$7.5 billion dollars)	2
up to 50% (\$15 billion dollars)	7
up to 75% (\$22.5 billion dollars)	1
100% (\$30 billion dollars)	1

In addition to maintenance, the participants indicated the following projects as priorities for funding in the Bay area: road expansion projects (1); projects to relieve traffic congestion (6) and automobile emissions (1); and expanding public transportation systems (4).

Overall, the participants were divided in their support for a revenue measure to fund additional transportation projects.